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## NOTICES FROM THE LICK OBSERVATORY.

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PREPARED BY MEMBERS OF THE STAFF.

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### COMET HOLMES.

Comet HOLMES has been an object of extraordinary interest. Its spectrum and its form at discovery were unique (see *Publications A. S. P.*, No. 26, p. 249); and its subsequent changes of form have been remarkable. On November 8 it was very bright, well defined, nearly round, and about 5'.5 in diameter. It grew larger and fainter, until, on November 24, I observed it to be about 20' in diameter, and to have assumed the ordinary comet form. It continued to diminish in brightness, and Professor HOUGH writes that about the middle of December it had become so faint as to be a difficult object with the 18½-inch refractor, and that the volume diminished, until, on the 14th of January, it appeared like a faint globular nebula, about 2' of arc in diameter.

Some time between January 14 and 16 the faint nebulous mass changed into what appeared to be a nebulous star of about the 8th magnitude! It was first detected by PALISA of Vienna, and, later the same evening, by HOUGH at Evanston, by WILSON at Northfield, and by BARNARD at LICK Observatory. The stellar nucleus was surrounded by a bright and well defined nebulosity, about 45" in diameter. Observations on succeeding evenings showed that the nucleus was decreasing in brightness and the nebulous envelope was growing larger and fainter. In February the comet was very diffuse, with a very poorly defined nucleus.

In view of the fact that the orbit of the comet does not differ greatly from those of the asteroids, Mr. S. J. CORRIGAN of St. Paul suggested that possibly the origin of the comet could be attributed to the *collision of two asteroids*, but, after a careful investigation, he concluded that no two of the already discovered

asteroids could so collide. He therefore suggests as a hypothesis that the comet had its origin in the collision of two asteroids which were still *undiscovered*.

The most interesting and scholarly paper on this comet which we have seen is from the pen of Professor BOSS of Albany, recently published in the *Astronomical Journal*. In the following article will be found copious quotations from that paper. W. W. C.

CONCERNING THE ORBIT OF COMET HOLMES, AND ON THE  
FLUCTUATIONS IN BRIGHTNESS OF THAT COMET [BY  
LEWIS BOSS, DIRECTOR OF THE DUDLEY  
OBSERVATORY, ALBANY, N. Y.].

"Considering the past behavior of this comet it may be thought desirable to keep a watch upon its place for some time to come.

In order to facilitate this purpose, I present herewith the results of a new calculation of its elements. These are based upon normal places derived from observations of November 8 to November 15, inclusive, 31 observations; December 9 to December 16, 16 observations; January 16 to January 21, 20 observations. \* \* \*

ELEMENTS.

Epoch 1892, December 14.5, Gr. M. T.

$$\begin{aligned} M &= 26^{\circ} 18' 27''.6 \\ \pi &= 345 \ 53 \ 28.8 \\ \omega &= 14 \ 12 \ 14.9 \\ \Omega &= 331 \ 41 \ 14.0 \\ i &= 20 \ 47 \ 16.5 \\ \phi &= 24 \ 11 \ 52.4 \\ \mu &= 513''.9093 \\ \log. a &= 0.5594134 \\ T &= 1892, \text{ June } 13.21138 \\ \log. q &= 0.3303468 \end{aligned} \left. \vphantom{\begin{aligned} M \\ \pi \\ \omega \\ \Omega \\ i \\ \phi \\ \mu \end{aligned}} \right\} 1892.0$$

Period 2521.85 days.

The next perihelion passage is therefore due about May 10, 1899, and under rather less favorable relations than those which theoretically existed for the opposition recently passed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Taking into account the apparent precision of the observations, together with the satisfactory representation of the totality of observations since discovery, it becomes quite evident that there has been no very great displacement of the nucleus during